

# **HOT** **TOPICS**

CURRENT ISSUES FOR ARMY LEADERS

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## **Creating Opportunities for Army Spouses: The Employment Readiness Program**



**Improving Employment Prospects**  
***Preparing for the Job Search***  
**Available Assistance**

A SOLDIER considers many factors when facing reenlistment, including his or her spouse's career opportunities. In the past, this has been a challenging aspect of the reenlistment decision, since the transitory nature of Army life has made it difficult for spouses to plan careers of their own.

It's very important for the Army to be able to retain quality Soldiers. Meeting the career needs and expectations of spouses helps attain this goal. Two of the most important Army programs to assist spouses are the **Army Spouse Employment Partnership** and the **Army Employment Readiness Program**.

The ASEP is a unique and expanding partnership between the Army and corporate America, designed to provide jobs, training opportunities and career progression for Army spouses while providing American companies with diverse, talented and dedicated employees.

Corporate and military partners represent retail, healthcare, hi-tech, telecommunications and defense industries. They offer varied career opportunities for skilled, unskilled and professional workers, and they are already in the communities where military spouses live and work – communities right outside our installations' borders.

The ERP provides employment, education, training and transition information and referral services to help spouses find and get career-oriented employment. Available at any of the 87 Army Community Service centers worldwide, the ERP offers employment databases, computers and programs to assist with writing professional resumes, and workshops in which spouses can gain skills that are valuable in their job searches.

Together, these two important Army programs work to increase career opportunities for spouses and foster an even stronger sense of spouse satisfaction, which in turn makes it easier for the Army to retain the quality Soldiers it needs.

**COL CHARLES T. SNIFFIN**  
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# A Valued Work Force

ARMY spouses are young, dynamic, educated, hard working, creative, flexible and versatile. They are the silent heroes of our nation's defense. They "hold down the fort," take care of households, raise families and hold jobs while supporting their Soldier-spouses' careers. Too often, that means sacrificing their own careers.

American corporations value employees who are educated and diverse, with strong values and work ethics. They pine for employees who are eager to work and dedicated to their jobs once they are hired.

The Army Spouse Employment Program is determined to bring Army spouses and corporate America together in a relationship that is much more than a marriage of convenience, but rather a long-term partnership benefiting both parties. This partnership is designed to enhance employment opportunities and improve job portability for spouses of U.S. military members while fulfilling corporate America's demand for skilled workers.





# Creating Opportunities for Army Spouses

AMY Rossi changed jobs four times in seven years. She's been a test administrator, a business professor at Hawaii Pacific University and an Army Employment Readiness Program manager. The one thing that hasn't changed – which is also the primary reason she's had so many jobs – is that Rossi is married to a Soldier, accompanying her husband wherever his military career sends him.

“In helping my husband become successful, I feel at times that I have to give up my dream,” said Rossi, currently manager of operations and communications for Concentra Corporation in Virginia. “When you frequently move, it's difficult to find employers you'd like to work for, especially when you're in a new area without a network of support such as friends and family.”

Rossi's story is one that many spouses across the Army know well. The military lifestyle involves frequent moves, and those moves can make it difficult for Army spouses to plan a career, compete for promotions, become vested in employee compensation and retirement plans, and maintain job continuity — things those outside the Army take for granted.

Army spouses also may face limited transportation opportunities at geographically isolated installations,

and limited off-post job opportunities at remote overseas locations.

To address these challenges, an exciting new Army program, coupled with an existing one, is beginning to improve the situation, thanks to a renewed emphasis – by the Army, the Department of Defense and Congress— on the importance of increasing military spouse employment as one means to improve the retention of military personnel.

Many military members make retention decisions based on their families' financial stability, say Army officials. Approximately 55 percent of Army spouses who are in the workforce contribute between 20 and 40 percent of their families' incomes.

## **Army Spouse Employment Program**

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 directed DoD to examine existing spouse-employment programs to increase the employability of military spouses. In May 2002, then Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki asked the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center to reinvigorate the spouse-employment program. He felt enhancing partnerships with public and private sector employers was the key.



In December 2002, Shinseki hosted an employment summit that laid the foundation for the ensuing partnership between the Army, 13 corporations and two military agencies.

The summit charter included a commitment to explore ways to develop collaborative relationships between corporations and existing Army resources, making corporate America aware of Army spouses' professional attributes, and expanding spouse training and employment opportunities.

The new Spouse Employment Partnership was officially unveiled in October 2003. The corporate and military partners represent retail, healthcare, hi-tech, telecommunications and defense industries. They were selected because they represent a wide spectrum of career opportunities for skilled, unskilled and professional workers with an international scope, and they have a strong presence in the communities where military spouses live and work.

The 13 corporate partners who signed the Statement of Support are:

- Army and Air Force Exchange Service
- Bell South

- Boys and Girls Clubs of America
- Computer Sciences Corp.
- CVS Pharmacy
- Dell Inc.
- Home Depot
- Hospital Corp. of America
- Lockheed Martin
- Manpower Inc.
- Sears Logistics Services Inc.
- Sprint
- Merck and Co.

The two military partners are the Civilian Personnel Office and the Army Career and Alumni Program.

Some of the partners have added a special section for military spouses to the career opportunities portion of their Web sites. They are also individually tracking the success of their efforts through various measures developed in concert with Army program officials. These measures are designed to show the recruitment and hiring of Army spouses.

The partners also participated in five job fairs in September and October 2004, conducted at military installations and hosted by ACAP and the Spouse Employment Partnership.





Bell South added an e-mail link for military applicants, [military.relations@BellSouth.com](mailto:military.relations@BellSouth.com), to address questions and assist spouses and other military applicants in their employment processes. So far, more than 200 military candidates have been assisted through this e-mail resource.

Computer Sciences Corp. is ensuring that its hiring managers are aware of ASEP through various corporate communications, including memos to senior leaders and electronic newsletters. Local CSC hiring managers are working with Army Employment Readiness Program managers at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.; Fort Monmouth, N.J.; Redstone Arsenal, Ala.; Fort Carson, Colo.; Fort Belvoir, Va.; and Fort McPherson, Ga.

Dell Inc. started a Dell Army-spouse networking group and held a career information session at Fort Hood, Texas. Dell executives and Army officials are also exploring the possibility of a joint-venture call center in Killeen, Texas, which would provide job opportunities for military spouses.

"It's more than just good business," said retired MG Frank L. Miller Jr., vice president of Government Operations and Services at Dell. "This is all about ensuring we are making a capital investment to a singularly special group of people who protect our nation."

ASEP partners continue to meet quarterly as the program continues to move forward. Members are part of work groups that develop marketing resources and Web-site enhancements, and outline procedures to nominate and accept new members to the partnership, among other issues. New members will be announced at the annual Association of the United States Army conferences.

Smaller companies — those with more than 10 and fewer than 5,000 employees — are also being courted for Army spouse-employment opportunities, especially those companies with a track record of hiring Army spouses. Such companies are being encouraged to sign a "Statement of Support" with an installation's garrison commander to formalize the relationship.

"Our ACS centers have a wonderful relationship with those small businesses that are located outside the gates, and a number of them are already involved in providing support and jobs and training opportunities to our spouses in their areas," said Delores Johnson, Family Programs director at CFSC.

"One of the things that the partnership is doing, recognizing that they can't reach everyone, is helping the Army develop a consistent program of recognizing those small companies that have good track records in hiring Army spouses."

# Army Spouse Demographics and Job Skills

## Number of Army Spouses

Army 254,739

Army Reserve 92,118

Army National Guard 163,669

Source: FY03 Army Demographics Survey

## FY03 Army Demographics

34 years old or younger: 68%

Female: 93%

Male: 7%

College/vocational or post secondary education: 69%

Served on active duty: 14%

Volunteer in civilian and military-affiliated organizations: 26%

Source: Survey of Army Families IV

## Employment Status

Members work full time: 75.8%

Members work part time: 5.7%

Member was unemployed: 9.7%

Students: 8.7%

## Marital Data:

Married more than five years: 67%

Married less than a year: 8.6%

Source: 2002 Survey of Spouses of Activated National Guard and Reserve Component Members





# Preparing for the Job Search

## A Look at Skills

Skills that can be applied to different work situations are portable. For example, managers need organization, communication, supervision, budget, management and negotiation skills. Developing and documenting some of these skills increases employment opportunities.

Hobbies or special interests — such as cooking, photography, or gardening — are also portable skills. Spouses can often turn these interests into jobs.

### Document your job and specialized skills:

- ❶ In addition to copies of your current resume, applications and employment-verification forms, make sure you have copies of transcripts or course certificates to prove you have the skill (data processing course, cooking school certificate, etc.).
- ❷ Create portfolios containing examples of your work (“clips” of writing assignments, photography, art works, etc.) and performance reviews.

## Portable Jobs

### Teaching in the United States:

- ❶ In the United States, each state is responsible for its own public schools. Regulations dealing with the requirements and qualifications necessary for certification are developed and imposed by each state’s department of education.

### Teaching English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language:

- ❶ Because of the changing composition of the U.S. population, ESL teaching opportunities abound in public schools (K-12), bilingual programs, adult education programs, private language schools, and at colleges and universities.
- ❷ Many ESL/EFL teaching opportunities exist outside the United States although, increasingly, programs in countries such as Japan and Mexico seek teachers with a certificate or a degree.





### **Training:**

- ❶ The American Society for Training and Development estimates that American companies spend more than \$30 billion annually on formal training programs, and expects that number to grow. Although some large companies have training divisions, most organizations hire trainers on a freelance or contract basis.

### **Interpreting/Translating**

- ❶ Many cities and states have large non-English-speaking populations, and they need social services, health, education, and law-enforcement personnel who are fluent in another language in addition to English. Freelance interpreters usually get short-term contracts to interpret at private international conferences in fields such as science, medicine or economics. The principal languages used in the freelance conference field are English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

### **Court Interpreting**

- ❶ Several state court systems and the Federal courts call on freelance interpreters to assist in trials and hearings involving non-English-speaking people.

### **Writing, Editing, Publishing**

- ❶ There are many jobs for those with writing, editing, and publishing skills. Almost every employer produces publications — either for customers or employees. In addition, marketing, advertising, and development departments require employees with writing skills. In addition, technical writers, who translate technical material into a more easily understood form, are needed by a wide variety of firms.

### **Computers**

- ❶ Although computer skills are extremely portable, they must be constantly upgraded with the latest technology. Employers are looking for specialties — database, communications or application design, for example.

### **Health Care**

- ❶ The allied health fields are a growing source of employment for those with nursing or other medical skills. In addition to one-on-one patient care, there is also teaching, research, and administrative work.
- ❶ Many nurses are setting up their own businesses — temporary nurse agencies, pharmaceutical distribution, day care for the aged, performance reviews of hospitals, and mobile dialysis. Another new field is liability advice firms that do research for attorneys' personal injury and malpractice cases.

### **Flexibility Breeds Success**

Knowing your skills and the availability of jobs, be prepared to adapt. If you can't get a nursing job at your overseas installation, you might teach English-language medical terms to local doctors and nurses. If you design jewelry as a hobby, you might turn that into a small business. If you cannot work as a journalist, you might be able to edit English language publications if you're overseas. If you have cared for dogs all your life, offer obedience training classes or pet grooming services. If you're flexible, the opportunities are endless.

[Adapted from *Employment Options for Foreign Service Family Members*, U.S. State Department]

# Employment Readiness Program



A cornerstone of the Army Spouse Employment Partnership, the Employment Readiness Program supports and complements a spouse's efforts to develop a job-search campaign. The ERP provides information and referral services for employment, education, training, transition and volunteer opportunities, and works closely with the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center and other on- and off-post agencies.

## What Are the Specific Program Goals?

- Enable spouses to relocate more readily with their military sponsors.
- Provide information on employment, education and volunteer opportunities.
- Assist clients in planning careers that are compatible with the mobile military lifestyle.
- Teach clients how to develop and use job-search skills and strategies.
- Connect spouses with employer, business, professional and support networks.
- Assist clients in finding employment opportunities that meet their needs.
- Computers and programs to prepare a resume and cover letter and to conduct online job searches
- Up-to-date job announcements in Job Bank books
- Employer fact sheets, agency business cards and recruitment information
- Self-directed job search through an employment resource center
- Information and referral
- Career counseling and coaching
- Employer and resource development
- Job fairs and other special events

## What Assistance does ERP Provide?

First, a professional job search trainer helps you identify immediate and long-range career goals and develop a career plan based on a needs assessment. Employment Readiness will provide job-search training, seminars and workshops, but it's not a job-placement service. You'll also have access to an unlimited number of Internet databases that list employers and employment opportunities, plus job announcements and employment information from government, civic and military agencies.

## How Do I Start?

There are 87 ACS centers worldwide. Visit or call the ACS office nearest you to make an appointment to begin the job-search process. The centers offer:

The Employment Readiness Program works closely with several programs within the family support umbrella. At many locations worldwide, the ERP coordinator is also the Transition Assistance Program coordinator. Where there is a separate ERP and TAP manager, they often work together to maximize their services.

## What Can I Do To Help Myself?

Think about what kind of career you want to have as you follow your Soldier-spouse throughout his or her career. Think about ways in which that career can be enhanced through the kinds of companies that are members of the Spouse Employment Partnership. It also helps to know which careers offer the best prospects. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook provides details on projected job growth and employment prospects for about 270 occupations.

# RESOURCES



THE Army Community Service Employment Readiness Web site contains links to relocation assistance, job-search skills, program manager contacts and employment opportunities.

[www.armycommunityservice.org/vacs\\_employment/home.asp](http://www.armycommunityservice.org/vacs_employment/home.asp)

The Military Spouse Corporate Employment Opportunities Web site, part of the ACS Web site, has links to each of the 13 corporate partners involved in the Army Spouse Employment Partnership.

[www.armycommunityservice.org/vacs\\_employment/partners.asp](http://www.armycommunityservice.org/vacs_employment/partners.asp)

The U.S. State Department's "Employment Options for Foreign Service Family Members" is full of useful information and links for an audience that has much in

common with Army spouses. The entire publication is online, including nearly 50 pages of useable resources. [www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/2059.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/rsrscs/pubs/2059.htm)

The U.S. Department of Labor Web site has links to state labor offices and job information, including the Bureau of Labor Statistics. [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

The National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse has information about the teaching profession. [www.rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse](http://www.rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse)

iVillage's Web site has links to information on working from home, finding a job, getting ahead, and a host of other job and work-related subjects. [www.ivillage.com/work](http://www.ivillage.com/work)





# Good to Know!

## The Military Spouse Preference Program

THE Military Spouse Preference Program is available to increase employment opportunities for spouses of Armed Forces members. Spouses who relocate with their military sponsors on a permanent change of station move to an active duty assignment receive priority in the employment selection process.

Spouse preference eligibility begins 30 days before the sponsor's reporting date and continues throughout the tour until the spouse accepts or declines an appropriated or non-appropriated fund position – lasting one year or longer – from any federal agency in the commuting area. In overseas areas, spouses do not receive preference until they actually arrive at the overseas location. For more information on the Military Spouse Preference Program visit your Employment Readiness Program office or [www.goacs.org](http://www.goacs.org).

**BOTTOM LINE**

*Your career-building network is here.*